

# THE BRAHMAVÂDIN.

“एकं सत् विभावदुधावदन्ति.”

“That which exists is One: sages call it variously.”—*Rigveda*, I, 164, 46.

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## HEAVEN AND EARTH.

1. May the great Heaven and Earth, worthy of praise, become brilliant with light and with the illuminating hymns of praise ; for, fixing the vast and extensive ones apart, the steer roars with far-reaching loudness.

2. May these goddesses (Heaven and Earth) who deserve to be worshipped, who are harmless, rain-giving, faithful, undeceiving, and who are parents of Gods, and fulfillers of sacrifice, stand associated with the gods that are to be worshipped, and with the illuminating hymns of praise.

3. He was indeed, in the worlds, a clever artizan who produced these two, Heaven and Earth, and who by his skill brought the two spacious, immoveable, well-fashioned, unsupported worlds together.

4. O ye Heaven and Earth, who with one accord, wish to bestow on us plenty with spacious dwellings inhabited by wives, and who are far-reaching, universal, and worthy to be worshipped, protect us well. May we through our hymn become owners of chariots and of slaves.

5. To both of you, shining ones, we offer in abundance our lofty hymn of praise. We approach you, pure ones, to glorify you both.

6. You sanctify each other's form ; by your own power you rule. You always observe the Law.

7. O mighty ones, you accomplish, further, and fulfil, Mitra's Law. You sit around our sacrifice.

*Rig Veda*, IV, 56.

The *steer* in the first verse of this hymn is interpreted to mean the thundering rain-cloud.

In this hymn also Heaven and Earth are spoken of as 'parents of gods.' But it is worth noticing that there is reference to a clever artizan who produced these two.

The so called polytheism and physiolatry of the Vedas is generally based by critics on their ignorance of the distinction which the Vedas clearly and almost uniformly make between God and gods. Heaven and Earth are the parents of gods, and are among the gods. But God made them and all.

The word *Rita* is interpreted in the last two verses as 'Law', in accordance with Professor Max Müller's explanation of the word. Sâyana makes it mean 'sacrifice'; and students of

ancient Sanskrit literature need not be told how the sacrifice of the ancient Indian Aryas was often symbolic of certain astronomical phenomena occurring in accordance with law and order. The law and order of things thus came in all probability to denote their sacrificial form of representation.

Varuna and Mitra are pre-eminently the upholders of Law in Vedic religion. And how pregnant with moral force is this idea of Law!

The old faith in the efficacy of the hymn of praise is very striking. It has been well said that poets make our gods for us, bring them down to us, and lift us up to them.

### SAYINGS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA.

(Continued.)

9. What is the state which a *Siddha* attains? (A perfect man and well cooked food are both called *Siddha*. There is a pun here on the word *Siddha*.)

As potato or brinjal when *Siddha*, i. e., when boiled properly becomes soft and pulpy; so a man when he becomes *Siddha*, i. e., reaches perfection is seen to be all humility and tenderness.

10. Five are the kinds of *Siddhas* found in this world:—

(1) The *Swapna-Siddhas* or those who attain perfection by means of dream-inspiration.

(2) The *Mantra-Siddhas* or those who attain perfection by means of a sacred *mantra*.

(3) The *Hathât-Siddhas* are those who attain perfection suddenly, like a poor man who suddenly becomes rich by finding a hidden treasure or by marrying a rich wife. So many sinners become pure all of a sudden and enter the kingdom of Heaven.

(4) The *Kripâ-Siddhas* are those who attain perfection through the grace of God. As a man in clearing a forest discovers some ancient tank or house and has not to build one with pain and trouble; so some fortunately become perfect with very little effort on their own part.

(5) The *Nitya-Siddhas* are those who are ever perfect. As in the gourd or the pumpkin creeper the petals of the flower are seen to come after the fruit; so the ever-perfect soul is already born a *Siddha* and all his seeming exertions after perfection are merely for the sake of setting an example to humanity.

11. So long as one is far away from the market, he hears only a loud and indistinct buzz, something like Ho!! Ho!! But when he enters the market-place, he no longer hears the uproar, but perceives distinctly that some one is bargaining for potato, another for brinjal and so on. As long as one is far away from God, so long he is in the midst of the buzzing noise and confusion of reason, argument, and discussion; but when once a person approaches God then cease all reasoning, argument, and discussion; and he understands the mysteries of God with clear and vivid perception.

12. When the Jews saw the body of Jesus nailed on to the Cross, how was it that Jesus, in spite of so much pain and suffering, prayed that they should be forgiven?

When an ordinary cocoanut is pierced through, the nail enters the kernel of the nut. But in the case of the dry nut the kernel becomes separate from the shell and when the shell is pierced, the kernel is not touched. Jesus was like the dry nut, i. e., his inner soul was separate from his physical shell, consequently the sufferings of the body did not affect him. Though the nails were driven through and through, he could pray with calm tranquility for the good of his enemies.

13. As one can ascend the top of a house by means of a ladder or a bamboo or a staircase, or a rope, so, divers are the ways and means to approach God, and every religion in the world shows one of these ways.

14. A mother has several children. To one she has given a bit of coral, to another a doll, and to a third some sweets and thus they all forget their mother absorbed in their play things, and she in the meanwhile goes on with her household work. But among them, the child that throws away his plaything and cries after the mother, "Mamma, dear Mamma"—she runs back quickly to him and caresses him. So, O man! you have forgotten your Divine Mother, absorbed in the vanities of the world, but when you throwing them off cry after Her, she will come at once and take you up in her arms.

15. Many are the names of God and infinite the forms that lead us to know Him. In whatsoever name or form you desire to call Him, in that very form and name you will see him.

16. If God is Omnipresent, why do we not see Him?

Standing by the bank of a pool thickly over-run with scurf and weed you will say that there is no water in it. If you desire to see the water, remove the scum from the surface of the pond. With eyes covered with the film of *Mâyâ* you complain that you cannot see God. If you wish to see Him, remove the film of *Mâyâ* from off your eyes.

17. Why can we not see the Divine Mother? She is like a high born lady transacting all her business from behind the screen, seeing all but seen by none. Her devout sons only see Her, by going near Her behind the screen of *Mâyâ*.

18. Dispute not. As you rest firmly on your own faith and opinion, allow others also the equal liberty to stand by their own faiths and opinions. By mere disputation you shall never succeed in convincing another of his error. When the grace of God descends on him, every one will understand his own mistakes.

# The Brahmavadin

SATURDAY, 12TH OCTOBER 1895.

## THE ETHICS OF THE VEDANTA.

The doctrine of *Karma* is, in all its essential features, the same for the three systems of the Vedânta philosophy. Whatever may be the conception formed of the ultimate nature and lot of the individual *Jiva*, whether they regard it as the supreme soul in temporary obscuration, or as a distinct entity now and for ever, and whatever view they may hold regarding its relation to the *Brahman*, Hindu philosophers are in entire accord on the question of the force that determines for the individual his career upon this earth. The life of each man is shaped for him in the main by *karma* or conduct. But what is this *karma*, which is so potent over our lives? A bare statement of the theory in its extremest outlines seems to bring it perilously near to fatalism. But the two are quite distinct and even diametrically opposed. The latter is destructive of all responsibility in man; it reduces him to a mere automaton moving along grooves cut out for him by an inexorable power. The Hindu conception of the human will and human responsibility is far different from this. The question of the Liberty of the Will, originating in most part in the unfortunate application to the Will of the term Liberty, a term that has no more connection with it than any other term like whiteness, sweetness, &c.,—this controversy seems to be unknown to Hindu Philosophy. But the doctrine of *karma* leaves to the individual will the maximum amount of freedom that may be claimed for it; it makes the individual and the individual alone responsible for the whole of his career here. He is not under the control, in his voluntary actions, of any irresistible power external to him; he has not to suffer vicariously for the sins of others; and he cannot hope for redemption through the vicarious expiation of another. He knows that he has to bear the whole burden of his conduct himself.

Yes, all the deeds that men have done,  
In light of day, before the sun,  
Or veiled beneath the gloom of night,  
The good, the bad, the wrong, the right,  
These, though forgotten, reappear,  
And travel, silent, in their rear.

This escort of *karma* which thus ushers the individual into this world is the aggregate of his deeds, good and bad in his past lives. This is his *sanchita karma*, the aggregate of past deeds. Of this total aggregate, each particular deed works out its results on the individual in its due course. When a *Jiva* enters upon its career of life in a particular animal frame, it does so in expiation of some one of its deeds in the past. This, of which each one of us is now experiencing the result, and which has given us this particular physical and mental configuration, is known as *Prârabdha karma*—the commenced deed. The deeds which we may perform in the future form the *Agâmi karma*. The entire exhaustion of the aggregate *karma* of the individual would be tantamount to final liberation from the bonds of life and death, and hence would mean salvation. To this exhaustion the individual has to work his way; and destroy the accumulated *karma* of the past with the aid of his conduct in the present and in the future. But the course, already entered upon by him under the influence of what is known as *Prârabdha karma*, must be gone through to the end. Our present life belongs to it; and we cannot shake it off in the middle. But while undergoing the effects of this much of our deeds in the past, we may also be working our way to the final liberation from the sway of *karma*, and to salvation, by means of a virtuous life.

Here, at this stage of the argument, arises the question as to the nature of virtue. To a life of virtue the Vedântin ascribes the important result of relieving the human soul from its burden of *karma*. Virtue or good works lead to knowledge, and knowledge leads to salvation. A blind observance of the dicta of religion is useless; and knowledge without works is still worse: "All who worship what is not real knowledge, (who are engaged in works, good though they be), enter into blind darkness; those who delight in real knowledge (without the practice of virtue) enter into greater darkness."\* It is only those who know "at the same time both knowledge and not-knowledge"† (virtuous works) that can overcome death and secure salvation. We should realise in the first place the fact that this body is perishable and that virtue alone can lead to 'true knowledge.' But we must also remember that the attainment of true knowledge does not take away the need for a virtuous life. Sages like Janaka did not deem it

proper to abandon their duties and responsibilities even though they had ascended up to the highest steps of wisdom. "My body ends in ashes. Om! Mind, remember! Remember thy deeds! Mind, remember! Remember thy deeds!"\* Such is the solemn adjuration of the Vedântin to his mind. It is not to forget itself; nor is it to forget its deeds; and all the while, it should also remember that the "body ends in ashes."

What are the deeds which the mind is thus adjured to remember, and the man to perform? The believers in a personal God have an easy answer to this question. The commandments of the Divine Ruler of man form the bases for the distinction of right and wrong. The followers of Sankara on the other hand to whom the Brahman is not a personal entity distinct from the individual soul, may be supposed to be in a fix in answering this question. Where are they to seek for the foundation of ethical distinctions? The world is an illusion; the human soul is but a temporary sojourner in the physical surroundings of its own creation. But the bonds of *karma* must be severed; and this can be done only with the help of knowledge, and knowledge can be attained only by good deeds. And it becomes incumbent on them to explain how this is to be accomplished.

We confine our remarks in this article to the teaching on this subject in the *Īśāvāsya Upanishad*, which gives a brief statement of the Vedânta doctrine of ethics. It consists of but 18 slokas; but in this short compass it gives a clear account of the ethics, acceptable equally to all the three branches of the Vedântic school of thought. It is unnecessary, as we have said, to dwell upon the ultimate foundation of ethical distinctions in the case of the believers in a personal God. Let us see how the Advaitin also can secure an efficient basis for the inculcation of virtuous conduct in life.

The *Īśāvāsya Upanishad* teaches that man should live, work, know and attain salvation. Life is not to be thrown away by him. The human soul has a goal to win; that goal is, in the view of the Advaitin, the recognition of its oneness with the Brahman. Though The Jîva is to all appearance only a deluded and shackled toy of the phenomenal world and of *karma*, it is yet the all-embracing and all-pervasive spirit of the Universe. Into the logical basis of this doctrine it is not our purpose to enter at present. Its ethical aspect alone

concerns us here. There is an aspect of the *Advaita* theory that places it in a position of advantage ethically. It is the eminence of towering grandeur to which it raises the human soul. It is not simply a spiritual entity exalted above the Universe to the region of eternal bliss. It stands alone and has no second; it is greater than the greatest, and smaller than the smallest. We shall quote here a few of the expressions in which the Hindu philosopher endeavours to express his conception of the self: "That one moves not; but is swifter than thought. The senses never reached it. It walked before them." Each man may say unto himself: "I am the generator and the destroyer of the entire universe. Than me there is nothing higher. On me all this universe is woven, as gems are strung on a string. I am the flavour in the water, the light in the sun and moon. By me this universe is pervaded. I am the Supreme, the Highest, the Eternal, Unborn and All-pervading." Man is not the mere creature of a God; he is God Himself. He has not simply the image impressed upon him of his Creator; he is himself the Creator. He is the Lord of creation in a sense higher and nobler than that assigned to this expression by the religious of the West.

Will one imbued with such a lofty conception of his soul, condescend to contaminate it with evil in thought, word or action? Will he defile his *Ātman* with base deeds? Nobility of character cannot but come of necessity to a man with so noble an ideal of himself. But as man is constituted at present, before his eyes are opened by true knowledge, when he is not fully conscious of the true glory of his soul; and when "the door of the True is covered with a golden disc", how is he to get into the other side of the gates of Heaven? How is he to see the nature of the true? He believes in a good path which would lead him to the attainment of true knowledge; and he believes that virtue and knowledge would lead him on ultimately to *Brahma-Sakshâtkara*. But this life into which the *Jîva* is thrown by its *Karma* is not to be despised, as it furnishes us with a sphere for the practice of good works, and hence for the destruction of the aggregate of past Karma.

The injunction to the mortal is that "ever doing works here," he should "desire to live a hundred years."\* But he performs the works not for his

\* *Īsa. Up.* 17.

\* *Īsa. Up.* 2.

own benefit. "Works will not cling to a man" when he performs them in the right spirit. He secures enjoyment, not by seeking it by means of works, but only by a complete surrender of himself and of his works. "When thou hast surrendered all this, then thou mayest enjoy."\*

The Vedântin "beholds all beings in the self, and the self in all beings;"† and the human race, nay, all animate existence has its true beings in *Brahman*. The self should, therefore, be merged in this conception of the oneness or solidarity of all beings. "Verily, a husband is not dear, that you may love the husband; but that you may love the self, therefore a husband is dear. Verily, a wife is not dear, that you may love the wife; but that you may love the self, therefore a wife is dear."‡ Here is a basis for the practice of virtue in universal love, before which the injunction that we should love our neighbours as ourselves dwindles into insignificance.

But the main source of ethical light to the *Advaitin* is his own inner self. In himself he has an infallible guide along the right path. "Who-soever knows that person, whose dwelling is love, whose sight is the heart, whose mind is light,—the principle of every Self, he indeed is a teacher."§ The heart of every man is tuned to the promptings of righteousness; he needs no light other than what fills his own mind, and no teacher in virtue other than his own self. Here is the ethical basis in the innermost conscience of the individual for the Vedântin. But human conscience full of self-enlightenment as it is, is yet capable of being thwarted by the bodily environment of the soul. The True abides in the heart. "With the heart we know what is true. . . . The heart indeed is the Highest Brahman"|| But knowledge is not virtue. The *Jîva*, self-enlightened as he is, is yet entangled in the trammels of *Avidyâ*. The *Jîva* consists of desires. "And as his desire, so is his will; and as is his will, so his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap."\*\* Self-abnegation, the sacrifice of what binds or individualizes the *Jîva*, the undoing of the desires which enter the heart, this is the road to immortality. "When all desires which once entered his heart are undone, then does the mortal become immortal, then he obtains *Brahman*."†† The subjugation of the misleading impulses in us enables us to overcome evil. Without this self-discipline, knowledge and virtue cannot be possible for us, and

evil is not destroyed. "He therefore that knows it, after having become quiet, subdued, satisfied, patient, collected, sees self in self, sees all as self."\* The perception of the oneness of human nature, which is to the *Advaitin* the ultimate basis of universal love, and hence of ethical conduct, is impossible to the man who is not subdued and collected. "Evil does not overcome him, he overcomes all evil. Evil does not burn him, he burns all evil. Free from evil, free from spots, free from doubt,"† he attains to the *Brahman*.

The innate guidance relied upon by the *Advaitin* should not be taken to mean a disregard of our sacred writings. These are the outward embodiments of the breathings of the Soul; and as such serve to help the blinded *Jîva* to an easy realisation of its own self-contained light. The fire is there; but it is obscured by the covering of ignorance. And the contact with the light that burns eternally in the *Sâstras* imparts an electric stimulus to the inner spirit of man, and rouses it up to the height of its intrinsic greatness. "As clouds of smoke proceed by themselves out of lighted fire, thus verily, O Maitreyi, has been breathed forth from this great Being what we have as the Vedas, &c."‡

The life as a whole should be regarded as a "sacrifice." The conquest over temptations, which have root in our bodily cravings, is man's *Diksha*,—his preparation to enter upon the life-sacrifice. Its fruits are penance, liberality, righteousness, kindness and truthfulness. And the *yajna* is completed with death, which is the *acabhritha* the closing ceremonial of the sacrifice. A person who enters upon the path laid down in our sacred books, even though he begins with faith alone, is eventually led up to knowledge. And when good works and knowledge are combined, he is on the right road to salvation.

This is the ethics of the Vedântin built upon the solid foundation of his inner self, strengthened as it may be by a knowledge of the *Sâstras*. The Vedânta philosophy "has not neglected," to quote the words of Prof. Max Müller, "the important sphere of Ethics, but on the contrary, we find ethics in the beginning, Ethics in the middle, Ethics in the end, to say nothing of the fact that minds so engrossed with divine things as the Vedânta philosophers, are not likely to fall victims to the ordinary temptations of the world, the flesh, and other powers."

\* Isa. Up. 1. † *ibid.* 6 ‡ Brib. Up. 2, 4. § *ibid.* 3, 9, † *ibid.* 4, 3. \*\* *ibid.* 4, 1 †† *ibid.* 1, 1.

\* Brib. Up. 1, 1 † *ibid.* ‡ *ibid.*

## Translation.

### VEDARTHA SANGRAHA, A DISCOURSE ON THE UPANISHADS.

BY SRI RAMANUJA.

(Continued from page 19.)

Some who have undertaken to explain these passages, that are intended to declare His Glory, and others concerning identity, &c., describe that *Brahman* is undifferentiated knowledge alone; and that, though eternal, free, and self-luminous, it is, as deduced from the idea of identity implied in 'that thou art' and other passages, one with the soul (*Jiva*); that *Brahman* is itself ignorant, and is bound and released (in turn); that the whole universe, which is other than the undifferentiated only consciousness, and which is by nature full of infinite distinctions—such as that between the ruling Lord (*Īśvara*) and the things to be ruled over by Him, and others—, is unreal; that the distinction, that one is bound and another is released, does not exist; that the fact that, before this, some have been released (from *Samsāra*) is unreal; that there is only one body possessed of soul, all other bodies being soul-less; and that what that body is has not been definitely made out; that the spiritual preceptor who imparts knowledge is unreal; that the seeker after truth is unreal; and that scriptures and sciences (*Sāstra*) are unreal; that knowledge born of the *Sāstra* is also unreal; and that all this has been made out exclusively by means of the *Sāstra*, which is itself unreal. Others, by means of that same inference of oneness, have arrived at the opinion that the *Brahman*, although possessed of all auspicious qualities such as sinlessness, &c., is limited by some peculiar condition, is bound and released (in turn), and is itself the seat of many kinds of changes of an evil nature.

Others again, while describing the true nature of this knowledge of oneness, maintain that the *Brahman*, which is, by nature, an endless ocean of excellent qualities, is one in nature with living beings like gods, men, animals, and motionless living things, like the dwellers in hell, the dwellers in heaven, and those that have obtained *Moksha*; that it is, by nature, similar and dissimilar (at the same time); and that it is subject to many kinds of transformation like that into the ether (*virāṭ*) and so on.

There, in regard to the first view, those who are given to consider well the meaning of the scriptures point out defects that are difficult to be got over. They are as follow:—

To the *Brahman*, implied by the word "That" now under consideration, have been attributed the origin, the sustentation, the dissolution, &c., of the universe as caused by its own will, by means of the words which, commencing with "It saw, (and said)—may I become many, may I be largely born," go on to "Dear child, all these peoples have their root in *Sat*, have their abode in *Sat*, and are sustained by *Sat*, and others. The multitudes of

infinite, inestimable, and innumerable auspicious qualities like omniscience, omnipotence, the lordship over all, the quality of having no equal or superior in any way, the quality of desiring the truth, of willing the truth, and of illuminating all, and other similar ones, mentioned in other contexts as belonging to it (the *Brahman*); and also the quality of being completely free from all evil as deduced from innumerable passages like "The *Ātman* is sinless," and similar ones; all these are destructively affected in that view.

### THE PLACE OF THE PRANAVA IN DIVINE WORSHIP.

BY K. SUNDARARAMA IYER, M. A.

"यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि" "Among sacrifices I am the sacrifice of silent meditation."

*Om*, the well-known mystic monosyllable, is the *Pranava*. It plays a very important part in the liturgical literature of the Brahmins, and is seen to figure prominently in Vedāntic literature as well. How it came to occupy the position it has so long been holding, is an interesting question to enquire into. But it is not our present purpose to dilate upon the history of the *Omkāra*. To one, who studies the Vedānta from outside its religious pale, the *Pranava* may appear to be unmeaning; but to the student from within, it is full of the highest significance. From the standpoint of the Vedānta the object of all worship is, to direct man's "self-devotion" to higher ends than the mere acquisition of comfort and pleasure for the individual, and to enable man to understand fully the important destiny of the undeniably divine part in his nature. In such worship the *Pranava* has a very significant place, as being largely helpful to the silent meditation that is enjoined.

In one of his works, the venerable Vyāsa says:—"The recitation of *Om*, and the constant presentation before the mind of its signification; these are the two means of His *Upāsana* or worship." Here we have the authoritative declaration of the true mode of worshipping God by the greatest of our prophets, by him to whom mankind owes, it is declared, the existence and preservation of Holy Scripture and the right interpretation, of it to posterity in the immortal Vedānta. Śrī Krishna also says in the Bhagavad Gītā, Chap. VIII—"Who continues to utter *Om*, the One Imperishable *Brahman*, thinking upon Me; he who thus departs goes, when he quits the body, to the highest place." The recitation of *Om*, and the contemplation and realisation of its significance are matters of paramount importance to man. We have no right to denounce other forms of worship now in vogue in the world; but to those who place reliance on the wisdom and authority of our prophets and teachers in the past, there is no alternative but to carry out the injunction conveyed in the above passages. No doubt, among the people of this country, from time immemorial, this recitation and contemplation of *Om* has been in



some measure always practised, side by side or at least in conjunction with less authoritative and less enlightened modes of worship; but our modes of divine worship have largely become now a matter of mere form and ritualism, without helping to stir the emotions and penetrate the heart of man. We have now reached a critical epoch in our historical development when it is no longer possible for society to ignore the realities of human life and feel content with the decaying life of a past mediævalism. We must live like men, fiercely earnest and free from the bondage of gross materialistic errors, or face the miserable and inevitable alternative of extinction. At such a crisis, nothing demands more attention from a religiously-minded and devout people like the Hindus than the right mode of worshipping God, and nothing is better calculated to elevate our hearts and purify our emotions so as to create the social force, and the men of leading and light so sadly needed by us in every part of this great Indian Continent.

What is *Om*, what are its phases, and how are we to meditate and realise *Om*? Says the Mândūkya Upanishad:—" *Om* is the name of the Eternal and Omnipresent Spirit." And again:—" He, *Om*, encompasses the past, the present and the future. He encompasses even what the past, the present and the future do not comprise. He is the Great God, perfect in all." In the Kathopanishad we have, "*Om* is the adorable Being, to the study of whom all the life of *Brahmacharya* is consecrated and all practice of meditation devoted, and whose realisation it is the object of the four Vedas to accomplish." Says the Chhândogya Upanishad:—" *Om* is the Eternal and Omnipresent Being; He alone is to be worshipped." Not only Scripture, but all other sacred books in India teach that this mystic syllable is the greatest of all secrets and the source of all human power. For instance, Patanjali says in the Yoga Sûtras, I, 27, "His (*Īsvara*'s) indicator is the word of glory." This word of glory is the *Pranava*, literally, that which glorifies well, the mystic *Om*. When it is here said to be the indicator of *Īsvara*, the meaning is not that men conventionally use it as they use ordinary words to indicate their meanings, but that, as stated by the Mândūkya Upanishad and the Bhagavad Gîtâ already quoted, *Om* is itself supposed to signify *Īsvara*. It makes little or no difference even if we understand it simply as the emblem of God, and so says the Bhâgavatapurâna, XII. 6:—"From this sound (*sphota*, represented as coming from Brahma's heart) sprang the syllable *Om*, composed of three elements (A. U. M.) self-resplendent, of unmanifested origin, that which is the emblem of the divine Brahman, the Supreme Spirit." Innumerable similar passages may be quoted from every part of our sacred literature to show that '*Om*' indicates the Ruler of the Universe and that it even signifies the Divine Spirit.

Our next point is, what are its phases? These phases are four in number, three as indicated by the three *mâtras* or single letters of the syllable, A, U, and M; and a fourth which is not so indicated

and rightly too, but still implied in the mystic syllable. *A* represents God in the *wakeful* phase (*Jâgrat* in which God is manifest in external nature regulating the precise and orderly appearance and development of the phenomenal universe. *U* represents the state of dream (*swapnasthâna*). What is this phase of God? The Mândūkya Upanishad, IV, explains it to mean God viewed as "living in the interior design" of the universe, combining together the ideas which constitute the mental picture of the universe and contemplating its organisation and the successive stages of its growth. The Hindu idea of dream is that in it the mental faculty is alone and exclusively active, and is therefore conscious of its own thoughts and nothing else, of nothing that is objectively existent. Thus, *U* represents the contemplative phase of God. *M* represents God in the third (*sushupti*) stage, in the state of sound sleep. In this state, God is viewed, not as willing, or desiring, or designing or in external manifestation, but as Himself, as the embodiment of all wisdom and knowledge and delight and as realisable in His own consciousness. The fourth and last stage of God is the Absolute and the Unconditioned, with not a trace of the relative and the conditioned world as represented in any of the above forms, and therefore not indicated or capable of being indicated by a letter in the way that the other stages have been. This is the Essential Mode of Existence, the Universal *Ātman*, the true *Omkāra*.

The above description of God, or *Om*, in the four stages is defensible on purely analogical grounds and quite apart from all scriptural authority. With respect to every object of human, as of divine, creation, we may speak, in the first place, of its maker as living in the external embodiment of his skill; in the second place, as contemplating his own design of the object, as exercising his mental energy and resources in giving it a possible and rational ideal shape; in the third place, as living in the sum total of the experiences and cognitions which are latent in the man's mind and of which but a small part is put to use by him in his particular designs and activities from moment to moment; and in the fourth and last place, there is the personality of the man and his essential nature, forming in itself an indivisible whole, freed from all reference to, and association with, his activities. We find, in this manner that the scriptural account of the Deity (*Om*) is no mere baseless fancy, but has a hard and palpable basis of fact which is well calculated to impress the reason and faith of man. In the passage from nature up to nature's God, we go through four distinct phases of realisation of the Divine Being, *first*, there is the external manifestation of Him in the Universe; *secondly*, there is the design of it, as realised in the Divine Consciousness; *thirdly*, comes the inexpressibly and inconceivably large sum total of Divine cognitions constituting that consciousness; and *lastly*, behind and above all these, we have the essential, unconditioned, unknowable Divinity of God, which is "one only, without a second."

Let us now go on to inquire what constitutes

Divine worship. Two distinct steps, as we have seen, are enjoined, the recitation of *Om*, and the contemplation and realisation of *Om*. Patanjali says in the Yoga Sūtras, I. 28, "Its constant repetition (*Japa*) and intent meditation on its meaning (should be practised)." As regards the repetition, the recommendation is that it should be a purely mental (*Mānasa*) process, and not be degraded into a mere formal religious rite of the lip. Next comes the meditation and realisation of *Om*, and here the devotee is recommended to pass step by step through the four phases already stated, beginning from the external manifestation of God in the phenomenal universe and ending with the Essential and Absolute Divine Entity. The more we contemplate its meaning, the nearer shall we feel to the ineffable beauty and love which is associated with the intelligence which pervades the universe, and the light of the Supreme God will begin to shine in the hearts of the faithful. When this self-realisation is achieved, the devotee will begin to see how he is bound not only to every living thing, but to the entire sum of things, by the soft and silken cords of sympathy and kinship.

It is a mistake to suppose that this great and fruitful process of self-realisation will necessarily tend to isolate the men who practise it from the society of their fellow-men by placing them on a false pedestal of superiority, and will thus help to breed in men the feelings of pride and self-complacency. No doubt this would be the case if man could, so to speak, become God, that is, if he could realise the sum total of universal experience as issuing from, and returning to, the system of his own individual self-consciousness. But this surely is not the result of the process we have just described, but something far different. We see the world of experience, inner and outer, not as issuing from the unity of our own being, but from the unity of God's Being; and the recitation and contemplation of *Om* enables us to gradually attain to the perception—not a mere intellectual comprehension, but a vivid personal realisation in the heart of man—of God as the intelligence from which all things flow, from which not simply the disconnected group of particular facts, but the entire co-ordinated system of the universe finds its origin, rationale, and purpose. A living English writer has well said:—"If our minds are to find satisfaction in God, He must be thought of on the analogy of our own intelligence, as a unity for which there is a world of differences." That is exactly the way in which God is thought of in our Upanishadic philosophy, and when God is realized in this way by the devotee there is no reason to fear that he will prove anti-social and retire to his lion's den in the woods. After all the *Japa-gajña* does not constitute the whole circle of man's duties as taught in the Vedānta. Self-culture is again the main aim of this form of Divine worship; and when that culture is complete, it will inevitably lead of itself to the expansion of love and the growth of a living interest in all altruistic social activities. He that loses the love of self must find the love of God.

## THE ADVAITA PHILOSOPHY.

By N. VAJHIANATHA IYER, M.A.

(Continued from page 22.)

We have already said that the Brahman and the *Jīva* are the same, the one indistinguishable from the other. If so, what is the Brahman? Have we any knowledge of it? any evidence of its existence? The *Srūtis*, according to the Advaitin, teach that He alone exists; and to the believer, He is the one true existence, attributeless and all-filling. An objection may be taken to the statement that we learn of His existence from the *Srūtis*. Is knowledge of any kind possible of this predicateless and incomprehensible entity? The *Srūtis*, which are supposed to teach that He exists, that He is all-embracing, all-knowing and all-blissful, must convey this information in sentences, and each sentence must have a subject and a predicate. If the subject of one or more sentences of the *Srūtis* be the Brahman, what is it that they predicate of this predicateless Being? The predication is generally the simple assertion of existence and no more. When the *Srūtis* predicate *truth* (सत्ता), *endlessness* (अनन्त), *self-illumination* (स्वप्रकाश), of the Brahman, all these terms are to be taken as negations: *Truth* signifies that it is not untrue (असत्); *knowledge* that it is not ignorance (जड), &c. It is indeed true that Vedic sentences do in some cases predicate attributes affirmatively of the Brahman. But these serve only to refer us to the thing; and the attributes taken up for such a reference are accidental circumstances in no way essential to the entity of which they are predicated, though they may be sufficient to draw our attention to it. When we say for example, that the man before us is the very man whom we saw at some other place, the localization is of no moment whatever, and serves only for the identification of the individual. Similarly should we interpret the sentences of the *Srūtis* when they ascribe attributes to the Brahman. These have another use as well. The predication of special attributes in respect of the Brahman enables the man of weak intellect to concentrate his thoughts on a conceivable object, and to him this concentration would be impossible unless an object possessing attributes is presented to his imagination.

That the Brahman is attributeless (निर्गुण) may be established even independently of the *Srūtis*. If the Brahman alone exists and all else is illusory, the denotation of such terms as signify attributes must also be illusory, since these attributes are something different from the Brahman. We derive our knowledge of them not from the Brahman, but from our experience of the phenomenal. What is of the phenomenal is necessarily illusory and terminable, and cannot possibly belong to the eternal Brahman. Attributes belong to perishable illusions and perish along with them. How then can we predicate them of the imperishable One?

If the Brahman is beyond the reach of know-



ledge, how are we to establish the existence of what lies beyond the reach of our knowledge, and hence beyond the reach of our experience? Leaving the *Sūtras* out of account and taking his stand exclusively upon reason, the Advaitin says in answer to this question that arguments cannot reach that which lies beyond experience, and that the existence of the Brahman cannot, consequently, be disproved on rational grounds. This statement means one of two things, either that the existence of the Brahman is a pure matter of intuition or faith, or that though it is not capable of being *disproved* on the basis of reason, it may yet be *proved* on that basis. The former alternative has found favour with a large section of Western philosophers. From Kant to Herbert Spencer the unknowableness of the Absolute to the limited reason of man is a common doctrine. In the sphere of the pure or speculative reason, God is, according to Kant, unknowable and unprovable, though he makes God's existence a postulate of our practical reason. To Hamilton the notion of the Unconditioned combines the notions of the Infinite and the Absolute and is a "fasciculus of negations"; and it is therefore negative of the conceivable itself. But Hamilton is a firm believer in the existence of God; and the only possible ground of this assertion of Divine existence is in his view, the experience we have of the insufficiency of the conditioned to make up the whole of possible existence. He also thinks that the concepts of substance, cause, and moral law, lead us outwards and onwards to the transcendental reality, and to a natural faith in what we cannot reach by reason. With Spencer the phenomena of experience imply, but do not reveal, an unascertained something behind them; and in respect of this something the only attitude of mind that is possible is silent reverence and not intelligence. Here we have three eminent philosophers of hostile modes of thinking who yet agree both in the assertion of God's existence and in the equally positive assertion of the weakness of the human intellect to apprehend Him as He is. This existence of the Divine Essence is based by Kant on the moral consciousness of man, and by Hamilton on that, and on the felt necessity for the existence of something which transcends experience. Spencer demands a "silent reverence" for the unknown and unknowable background of the phenomenal world with as much fervour of feeling as Hamilton.

The Hindu philosopher does not, therefore, stand alone in his assertion that the Brahman is not a subject for argumentation. His conception of the Brahman is no doubt different from the conception of a personal God which alone is familiar to the readers of the Christian Scriptures. But even he has in modern times the German Hegel approaching him in the conception of the ultimate substratum of the universe; for it was Hegel's belief that the Absolute is not anything individual, but that it is something universal comprehending within it every individual. The doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God or of the Brahman is not easy to reconcile with the belief in His existence. The

question is inevitable as to how we come by this belief and as to its evidentiary value to prove God's presence in the universe. The easiest course would be to claim for the belief an innate origin, and an ultimate authority to set up its object as a real existence. Refuge has also been sought from this difficulty in a Revelation. The Advaitin believes that he is in full possession of this last support. But he would also have recourse to reason to prove the existence of the Brahman, even though he has categorically denied the possibility of disproving it on rational grounds. How reason is incompetent to disprove but competent to prove, it is impossible to comprehend. We can only say that in this respect he stands very much on the same ground as Hamilton, Mansel, and other philosophical believers in Christianity, to whom God is unknowable and even "a fasciculus of negations," and is yet benevolent, all-wise, and all-powerful. And his rational grounds for proving the existence of the Brahman are almost identical with those they rely upon to prove the existence of the Divine Ruler of the universe. He says, for instance, that, though the world is an illusion, there must be a cause competent to produce it; and that, unless we postulate an ultimate entity as the basis upon which to explain the illusion, the conclusion so elaborately established in respect of the illusory nature of the world loses its significance entirely. Besides this assumption of a First Cause as the last link in the series of causation revealed by the progressive phenomena of the world, a doctrine of great force in Western philosophy, the Advaitin has also advanced the argument for God's existence founded upon the doctrine of Relativity. Negation is the negation of something; without a noumenon, it has no meaning. Even the nihilist is compelled to assume the existence of his own self as the starting point of his destructive scepticism. And the Advaitin says that this self of the nihilist is the Brahman and that it alone exists, and that his philosophy is consequently quite safe against his attacks. Hamilton has employed this doctrine of Relativity exactly to the same effect, though he is also the clearest expounder of the doctrine of Relativity properly so called, of which the direct result would be the impossibility of securing a knowledge of God.

One assertion regarding the Brahman follows necessarily from the fact that He alone exists, namely, that He is all-embracing and without parts (अखण्ड), because to be so is the very essence of sole existence. Thus we get the result that there is an all-embracing and attributeless entity which alone really exists. It now remains to explain the relation in which the *Jīva* stands to the Brahman. From the doctrine that the Brahman and the Brahman alone exists, it follows that whatever else may appear to exist has only an illusory existence. If it be not an illusion, it must be identical with the Brahman. The *Jīva* is not an illusion and is the Brahman. The latter is all-full like space and the same everywhere; it has no parts and is a whole, undivided and indivisible.

True knowledge ascends up from the conviction of the illusory nature of the world to the perception of the identity of the knowing soul and the known Brahman,—and the moment this perception is realized, the distinction of *Jīva* and Brahman disappears. All duality then vanishes, and knowledge itself at least knowledge of the kind which receives that name from us—is no more a fact. *Avidyā* stands between the *Jīva* and the Brahman and forms the material cause of illusions. It is not a mere negation and can be destroyed only by true knowledge. That *Avidyā* or *Māyā* is an affirmative fact of the phenomenal cosmos is proved by statements like “I am ignorant”, “I know not Brahman”, which are made by each one of us, and which are meaningless unless ignorance is a fact, as these statements do not point to mere negation of knowledge, but assume the existence of ignorance. Knowledge is but the removal of what obscures its object and resembles the light introduced into a dark room. The screen of ignorance (*Avidyā*) cuts off the *Jīva* from a direct perception of its oneness with the Brahman; and the *Jīva* is like a person who enters a dark room after wandering in regions of light and is unable, consequently, to see the Brahman which stands immaculate and unaffected by the surroundings and shortcomings of the *Jīva*.

(To be continued).

## Correspondence.

### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND HIS WORK.

To the Editor of the “*Brahmavādin*.”

Sir,—Various are the testimonies borne to the great and good work Swāmi Vivekānanda is doing in the West. It is needless for us to quote them here as the Indian Public is as a whole more or less familiar with them.

When we begin to consider how far he deserves these encomiums, the question naturally arises has the Swāmi done anything to place humanity any higher than before in this materialistic age, and if so what? Has he really any solution of the problem of life to offer to the nineteenth century? We are of opinion that he has succeeded in drawing some attention to some things which will place humanity in a higher position than before, and that he has endeavoured to spread abroad the Hindu truth of the Harmony of Religions. Let us see how he has done so. But before addressing ourselves to this task it would be as well for us to answer the question which is often asked as to what his credentials are. The Swāmi is the bearer of the message of Bhagavan Sri Rāma Krishna. We will let the Swāmi speak of this message himself in his reply to the Madras address:—

“They (the people of Madras) saw in him and his message the first murmurs of that tidal wave

of spirituality which is destined at no distant future to break upon India in all its irresistible power, carrying away in its omnipotent flood all that is weak and defective, and raising the Hindu race to the platform it is destined to occupy in the providence of God, crowned with more glory than it ever had been in the past, the reward of centuries of silent suffering, and fulfilling its mission amongst the races of the world,—the evolution of spiritual humanity.” Again “What Wonder that with the blood of prophets running in your veins, with your lives blessed by such Achāryas, you are the first and foremost to appreciate and hold on to the message of Bhagāvan Sri Rāma Krishna!”

In the lecture delivered by him at Hartford on Soul and God he refers once more to this message. He says:—“The first message it bears is: Peace be unto you and to all religions. It is not a message of antagonism but of one united religion. Let us study this message first: At the beginning of this century it was almost feared that religion was at an end. Under the tremendous sledgehammer blows of scientific research, old superstitions were beginning to crumble away like masses of porcelain. Those to whom religion only meant a bundle of creeds and formless ceremonials were in despair; they were at their wits' end. Everything was slipping between the fingers.”

Again in his reply to the Address from Rājah Ajit Singh of Khetri (Rajpootana) the Swāmi again refers to the Voice of the Holy of Holies—the Voice of Bhagavān Ramakrishna—whose message it is his proud privilege to bear. He says:—

“One voice has spoken whose echoes are rolling on and gathering strength every day—a Voice even mightier than those which have preceded it, for it is the summation of them all. Once more the Voice that spoke to the Sages on the banks of the Saraswati, the Voice whose echoes reverberated from peak to peak of the Father of Mountains and descended upon the plains through Krishna, Buddha, and Chaitanya in all-carrying floods, has spoken again, once more the doors have opened. Enter ye into the realms of light, the gates have opened once more.”

Having thus made out that he is the accredited messenger of the teachings of his great *Guru*, let us turn our attention to the various matters upon which he has endeavoured to throw light.

HINDUISM IS A UNIVERSAL RELIGION.—This is one of the most important points in the message that the Swāmi bears to us and to others. At the Parliament of Religions he said “I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. WE BELIEVE NOT ONLY IN UNIVERSAL TOLERATION BUT WE ACCEPT ALL RELIGIONS AS TRUE.” How unlike popular Christianity! He quoted the following *śloka* in the Bhagavat Gītā.

Ye Yathā nāmprapadyante tānstathairva bhajāmya-  
ham

Mama vartmānuvartante manushyāḥ parthasarvasaḥ

“Whosoever comes to me, in whatsoever form, in that same form I reach him, they are all struggling

through paths that in the end always lead to me."

Alluding to the religious persecution in Christendom, and in Mahomedan and in other countries the Swâmi said "Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have possessed long this beautiful earth. It has filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for this horrible demon human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But its time has come: and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell to all fanaticism, to all persecutions with the sword or the pen, and to all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."

The Swâmi told the Christians present at the Chicago Parliament to cultivate peace, to learn Universal Toleration. He said in eloquent language which must have carried conviction to the minds of many present. "If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion would soon be written, in spite of their resistance: 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'

The Hindu, he emphasized, has no quarrel whatever with other religions. "UNITY IN VARIETY is the plan of nature, and the Hindus have recognized it. Every other religion lays down a certain amount of fixed dogma, and tries to force the whole society through it. They lay down before society one coat which must fit Jack and John and Henry, all alike. If it does not fit John or Henry, he must go without a coat to cover the body. They have discovered that the absolute can only be realized or thought of or stated through the relative, and the images, cross or crescent, are simply so many centres,—so many pegs to hang the spiritual idea on. It is not that this help is necessary for every one, but for many, and those that do not need it, have no right to say that it is wrong." On the contrary "to the Hindu the whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal." God is the same white light coming through different coloured glasses. Again

*Mattah parataram nânayat kinchidaste Dhananjaya,  
Mayi sarvavidya prolam sutre manigand iva.*

"I am in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls" (Bhagavad Gîtâ). In the Vedânta Sûtras, continues the Swâmi, it is said that outcasts even may reach perfection.

*Antarî chîpi tu tadbrîshkteh*—(Book III, Chap. IV, 36). The Swâmi's picture of Universal Religion is exceedingly interesting. He says:—"If there is to

be ever a universal religion, it must be one which would hold no location in place or time; which would be infinite like the God it would preach, whose sun shines upon the followers of Krishna or Christ, saints or sinners, alike; which would not be the Brahmin or Buddhist, Christian or Mahomedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity would embrace in its infinite arms and find a place for every human being, from the lowest grovelling man who is scarcely removed in intellectuality from the brute, to the highest mind, towering almost above humanity, and who makes society stand in awe and doubt his human nature. (pp. 20-21 *ibid*).

It is gratifying to note that the Swami's teaching as to Universal Toleration has been appreciated not only in America but also in India. *The Madras Mail* which is conducted by a Christian editor says:—"The great lesson taught by the Parliament of Religions is that beneath the great diversity of religions in the world there is one religion; and the important work for all to do is not to persuade men to accept this or that religion, but to embrace the religious spirit in a broad and liberal sense of the word. And whatever else this great gathering may or may not have done we may hope at least that it has rung out the death-knell of religious bigotry and persecution for ever." "Every religion is governed by the laws of its own growth. The Christian is not to become a Hindu, nor a Hindu a Christian," says the Swami, "The seed is put in the ground, and earth and air and water are placed around it. Does the seed become the earth, or the air, or the water? No. It becomes a plant, it develops after the laws of its own growth, assimilates the air, the earth, and the water, converts them into plant substance, and grows into a plant." Such is the message of Swâmi Vivekânanda to the West and to the World. Who can deny the need of it? And who can think lightly of the value of his work?

CALCUTTA.

M. N. G.

## Notes.

Harmlessness as the first flower; restraint of the wandering senses and organs, as a flower; compassion for all beings as a flower; forbearance or forgiveness as a most special flower; knowledge or wisdom unto salvation as a flower; penance or self-restraint as a flower; meditation as a flower; and truthfulness as a flower; these eight as flowers shall prove acceptable to the Omnipresent.—*Prapanna Parijata*, v. 29.

To act morally and to act religiously, are united in the most essential way. We ought entirely to aim at inward and outward harmony; to fulfil at once the law and the will of God, and each for its own sake. There is therefore a one sided moral acting and a one sided religious acting.—Novalis.

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